

# Rural & Frontier Health Division Update

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Welcome to the seventh issue of the "Rural and Frontier Health Division Update!" This newsletter is provided as an informational source on activities involving the programs and services within the division. Comments and/or suggestions are welcomed and may be addressed to [WDH-RFHD@health.wyo.gov](mailto:WDH-RFHD@health.wyo.gov).

## Office of Rural Health

### Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA), Medically Underserved Areas (MUA), and Medically Underserved Populations:

The Office of Rural Health has received numerous phone calls and emails about the impact of designations and particularly the Governor's HPSA designation. The Governor's HPSA designation announced in last month's RFHD Newsletter has one impact...all existing and new medical clinics in the identified areas are now eligible to apply to become Rural Health Clinics. This type HPSA designation does not carry any other benefit. Organizations interested in becoming a Rural Health Clinic must apply to the Office of Healthcare Licensing and Survey (<http://www.health.wyo.gov/ohls/index.html>). This website, [http://www.health.wyo.gov/rfhd/rural/Rural\\_Health\\_Clinics.html](http://www.health.wyo.gov/rfhd/rural/Rural_Health_Clinics.html), provides a considerable amount of information on Rural Health Clinics. The decision to become a RHC is up to each medical clinic.

A Geographical HPSA has benefits from as many as 38 federal programs. Below is a list of the four different HPSA and MUA/MUP designation types and the eligible benefits and programs. The Governor HPSA column is highlighted for ease of reference. Questions should be directed to Jeff Hopkins at (307) 777-2930 or [Jeff.Hopkins@health.wyo.gov](mailto:Jeff.Hopkins@health.wyo.gov).

**Programs Using HPSA and MUA/P Designations**

PROGRAM	HPSA				MUA	MUP
	Geographic	Population	Facility	Governor	Area	Population
Recruitment of health professionals through National Health Service Corps	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Educational Loan Repayment for health care professionals through the National Health Service Corps	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Educational Loan Repayment for primary care health professionals through the State Loan Repayment Program	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
CMS gives physicians a 10% bonus payment for Medicare-reimbursable services	Yes	No	No	No	No	No

CMS exempts new physicians from new Medicare limitations on "Customary Charges"	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Health Center Program (funded under Section 330 of PHS Act) (AKA Community Health Center, FQHC). Must serve a population designated as MUA or MUP	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alikes must serve a population designated as MUA or MUP	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Rural Health Clinic Certification through Medicare	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Rural Health Clinic Act provides Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement for services provided by physician assistants and CRNPs in clinics in rural HPSAs	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Medicare HPSA bonus Payment (Primary Care & Mental Health)	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Indian Health Service Scholarship Program	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
PHS Grant Programs administered by HRSA's Bureau of Health Professions gives finding preference to Title VII and VIII training programs in HPSAs	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Medicare will reimburse physicians when they consult via telecommunications in a federally designated HPSA (Balanced Budget Act '97)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

### **Physician Recruitment Grant Pays Off:**

WHRN received confirmation that Pat Connally, a family medicine physician, will begin working in Sundance. She is a native of the area and is happy to be settling there where she feels at home. She will be moving from Colorado. The best part of this placement is that Sundance is one of the five communities awarded the recruitment grant crafted by the Wyoming Legislature in 2008. As a result of this hire, they will be able to receive award money for recruitment expenses up to \$80,000 as well as \$90,000 of loan repayment for Dr. Connally.

**Health Work Force Information:**

The new HRSA-funded Health Workforce Information Center (HWIC) provides free access to the most recent resources on the nation's health workforce. Operated by the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences, the new site offers the latest on:

- Health workforce programs and funding sources;
- Workforce data, research and policy;
- Educational opportunities and models;
- Best practices; and
- Related news and events, also available through e-mail updates.

For more information and articles click on the following links:

[www.healthworkforceinfo.org/news/](http://www.healthworkforceinfo.org/news/)

<http://www.healthworkforceinfo.org/news/may09/>

**Quality Health Indicators:**

The Wyoming Office of Rural Health (ORH) announces that Keri Wagner, ORH Program Assistant, is the Wyoming State Administrator for the Quality Health Indicators (QHi) benchmarking project.

The ORH has partnered with the Kansas Hospital Education and Research Foundation (a branch of the Kansas Hospital Association) and several other states to allow Wyoming Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) to participate in QHi benchmarking project. All CAHs in Wyoming may enter data into the QHi database and compare themselves with other CAHs. This provides an instrument to evaluate internal processes of care and to seek ways to improve practices by comparing specific measures of quality with similar hospitals. Using QHi as a tool, regional networks of hospitals may select from an array of quality indicators to determine which measures meet their unique needs.

The ORH supplies \$10,000 annually from the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (Flex) Program to provide access to the QHi database for all Wyoming CAHs. The project has not been monitored in quite some time by ORH, and only a few hospitals are regularly submitting data into the system. In order to continue funding for this project, both CAHs not currently submitting data and the ORH will need to actively participate.

As the State Administrator for QHi, Ms. Wagner will provide support, monitor data submission, send reminders and updates to all participating CAHs, and prepare periodic reports. QHi findings and analyses encompassing all Wyoming CAHs will be a standing agenda item for Wyoming Critical Access Network meetings. Once the ORH has updated information from all the CAHs, Webinar training sessions on the QHi database will follow.

Point of contact for QHi is Keri Wagner, (307) 777-6512 or [keri.wagner1@health.wyo.gov](mailto:keri.wagner1@health.wyo.gov).

**Multicultural Health**

The next Multicultural Health Advisory Committee Meeting will be in Worland July 16 and 17. Please contact Betty Sones at (307) 777-5601 or [betty.sones@health.wyo.gov](mailto:betty.sones@health.wyo.gov) for detailed information.

The Wyoming Office of Multicultural Health (OMH) collaborated with Tribal agencies, Riverton Community Health Center, Mental Health Services and Community Providers in the organization of the first Holistic Approaches to Wellness Conference in Lander (April 24 & 25).

Through the joint efforts of WOMH, Laramie County PEAK Wellness Center, and National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, a Trauma Informed System of Care Conference was held in Cheyenne (May 7 & 8). These conferences received favorable feedback which prompted the planning of a Trauma Informed System of Care Conference for south-west Wyoming this fall.

**Office of Telehealth and Telemedicine****Broadband Initiatives under America's Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)**

The ARRA provisions for broadband funding include the following:

- Grant application rules are expected by the end of June, with applications due in September;
- The Wyoming team is reviewing gaps in the fiber optic network, as well as the need for redundancy and higher speed;

Expect up to 100,000 applications nationwide, and multiple grant applications from Wyoming. The Wyoming Department of Health (WDH) website is a means to gather needs data, future capacity needs, cost of installation and maintenance of fiber, the need for coordination/collaboration in efforts, and sharing resources to accomplish the larger goals of the telehealth/telemedicine network.

**Community Services Programs**

Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding in the amount of \$5 million will be distributed to Wyoming communities this summer. Local service providers are applying for the stimulus money through Community Services Programs to address needs of low-income people in areas of jobs creation, housing assistance, healthcare and nutrition. ARRA funds will be available for approved projects through September 30, 2010. Distribution is through a poverty formula in use for anti-poverty activities through regular CSBG funding. Stimulus money is provided as an addition to the annual CSBG funds.

Wyoming service providers have contributed to a CSBG Information Survey conducted through Community Services Programs and designed to provide information about the benefits of CSBG funding to local communities. Data have been submitted by programs throughout the state to CSBG tripartite boards serving Wyoming counties, and compiled into a report to the National Association of State Community Services Programs which is submitted annually to Congress. This report identifies and outlines the benefits of Community Services Block Grant funding to the State of Wyoming and the achievements of community programs through the use of federal CSBG dollars.

Community Services Programs regrettably announces the departure of Benefits Specialist Angela Pierce, who is leaving in early July to move with her family to a new home in Arkansas. Angela has operated the End Stage Renal Disease and the Wyoming Cares/Wyoming Shares organ donor programs in Wyoming. We will greatly miss her dedication, her professionalism, and her compassion in overseeing these important activities.

### **Vital Statistics Services**

#### **VSS Annual Report 2007 Expanded Availability of Statistical Information:**

As a result of the records management systems being developed, VSS is also expanding its statistical and data capacity. We have released the most recent full report of 2007 and it can be viewed at: [http://wdh.state.wy.us/rfhd/vital\\_records/reports.htm](http://wdh.state.wy.us/rfhd/vital_records/reports.htm)

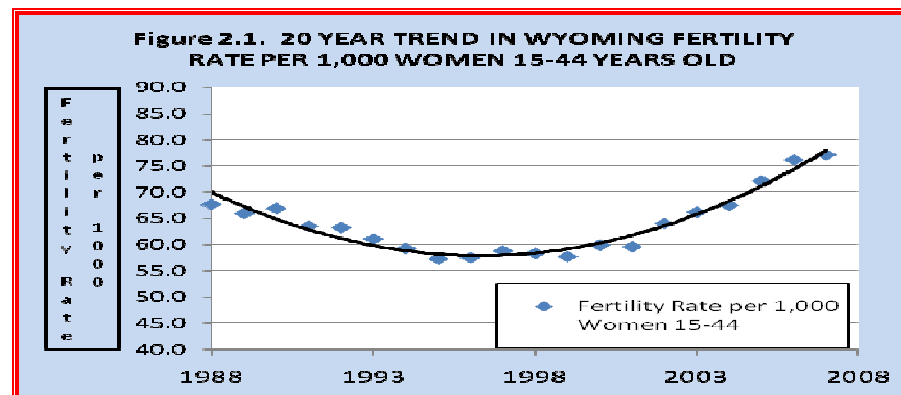
In the past weeks, we have added a little more than eighty variables to our regular report capabilities. These variables add greater depth to the information available on maternal risk factors, labor, and delivery along with infant anomalies. Some interesting excerpts from the report are offered here. Please visit Vital Statistics Services website, and find the data tables that are also offered in .xls format for personal study.

#### **2007 Wyoming Birth Increase:**

	Resident Births	Births in Wyoming (Occurrence)	Wyoming Births Out-of-State	Non-resident in Wyoming
2007 Births	7,832	7,317	706	191
% increase 2006	+ 2.5%	+ 3.2%	+ 4.3%	+ 4.8%

Two driving factors have been identified in the increase of births to Wyoming mothers in 2007.

- ▶ Wyoming population increase
- ▶ Fertility rate increased to 77.1% of 1,000 women 15 – 44 Years in 2007 [see Figure 2.1]



Two factors influencing these increasing births:

- small rise in teen mothers
 

2006	836 (10.9% of total births)
2007	912 (11.0% of total births)
- increase in unmarried mothers
 

2006	32.9% of total births
2007	35.0% of total births

**Increase in Unmarried Mothers:** The proportion of births to unmarried mothers in the United States has risen steeply over the past few decades, consistent with patterns in other countries, a report from CDC's National Center for Health Statistics shows.

In March, CDC reported that about 4 in 10 births in the United States in 2007 were to unmarried mothers. While a great deal of focus has been placed on births to unmarried teens, 6 out of 10 births to women between the ages of 20 and 24 were among unmarried women in 2007.

The trend in unmarried childbearing was fairly stable from the mid-1990s to 2002, but has shown a steep increase between 2002 and 2007. Between 1980 and 2007, the proportion of births to unmarried women in the United States has more than doubled, from 18 percent to 40 percent.

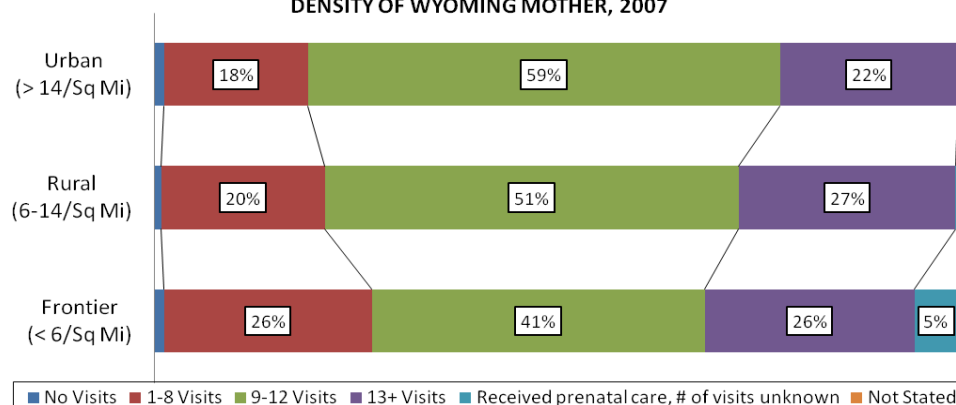
The report, "Data Brief #18: Changing Patterns of Nonmarital Childbearing in the U.S.," includes a section on international comparisons. The section shows the U.S. percentage of out-of-wedlock births falls into the middle range among the countries studied (data for Iceland, France, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, and Canada are for 2006).

Follow this link for additional information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/09newsreleases/unmarriedbirths.htm>

**Prenatal visits:** Are key to mothers' and babies' prognosis. Only 1% of Wyoming mothers had no prenatal visits regardless of population density. The risk of both infant deaths and complications of pregnancy are far reduced by attention to prenatal care and the identification of any conditions that may present during pregnancy and/or during delivery.

Figure 7.2.1. PROFILE OF THE NUMBER OF PRENATAL VISITS BY POPULATION DENSITY OF WYOMING MOTHER, 2007



**2007 Death Decrease:** Deaths occurring in Wyoming and deaths to Wyoming residents while outside state boundaries fell from 2006 to 2007.

	Resident Deaths	Deaths in Wyoming (Occurrence)	Wyoming Residents Dying Out-of-State	Non Resident Deaths in Wyoming
2007 Deaths	4,211	4,002	429	219
% Change from 2006	- 1.5%	- 2.2%	+ 5.4%	- 2.2%

Median age at death of 75.7 years was lower than national (78.1 for 2006). While life expectancy for women (80.3) was nearly the same as national, life expectancy was significantly lower (71.4) for men.

**RECENT NEWS FROM THE RURAL ASSISTANCE CENTER:****Secretaries Shinseki and Donovan Host First Meeting of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness under the Obama Administration**

[http://www.raconline.org/news/news\\_details.php?news\\_id=11436](http://www.raconline.org/news/news_details.php?news_id=11436)

Jun 19, 2009 -- The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness met today for the first time, with a mission to coordinate the federal response to homelessness and to create a national partnership with every level of government and the private sector to address homelessness in the nation.

**Maine Study Sheds Light on Costs of 'Hidden Homeless' in Rural America**

<http://www.startribune.com/nation/47123427.html> Jun 8, 2009 -- Minneapolis Star Tribune, (MN) article tells of a study, commissioned by the Maine State Housing Authority, that is believed to be the first study in the nation to provide a look at the costs of rural homelessness in a state.

**Report: Rural Mental Health Concerns Overlooked**

<http://theindependent.com/articles/2009/06/05/news/local/doc4a20b76f2e0da283509883.txt>

Jun 5, 2009 -- Grand Island Independent, (NE) article tells of a new report from the Center for Rural Affairs that found that rural Americans remain underserved in terms of mental health care providers and health insurance coverage for mental health services, despite the fact rural Americans suffer just as much from mental illness.

**FCC Acting Chairman Copps Releases Report on Broadband Strategy for Rural America**

[http://www.raconline.org/news/news\\_details.php?news\\_id=11253](http://www.raconline.org/news/news_details.php?news_id=11253)

May 28, 2009 -- Concluding that all rural Americans must have the opportunity to reap the full benefits of broadband services, Acting Federal Communications Commission Chairman Michael J. Copps released a report today providing a starting point for the development of policies to deliver broadband to rural areas and restore economic growth and opportunity for Americans residing and working in those areas.

**Secretary Shinseki Announces \$215 Million in Projects for Rural Veterans**

<http://www.veteranstoday.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=6913>

May 22, 2009 -- Veterans Today article reports that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has provided \$215 million in competitive funding to improve services specifically designed for Veterans in rural and highly rural areas.

**USDA Seeks Applications for Grants to Repair Rural Housing**

[http://www.raconline.org/news/news\\_details.php?news\\_id=11206](http://www.raconline.org/news/news_details.php?news_id=11206)

May 21, 2009 -- Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced today that USDA is accepting applications for grants to help low- and very-low-income rural residents repair their homes.

**Upcoming Events:**

- Skill Building Workshop, July 21-22, 2009, Park City, UT
- Quality and Clinical Conference, July 22-24, 2009, Park City, UT
- NOSORH Region E Pre-Conference: Rural Health Workforce, August 18, Laramie, WY
- NOSORH Region E Annual Workshop, August 19-20, Laramie, WY
- Rural Health Clinic Conference, October 6-7, 2009, Portland, OR
- Access Hospital Conference, October 7-9, 2009, Portland, OR

**We're on the Web!**

See us at:

[www.health.wyo.gov/rfhd](http://www.health.wyo.gov/rfhd)